

Final report

Specialty Growers Production and Marketing Initiative Grant Jennings County Growers Cooperative, Inc.

Introduction:

As provided in your June 23, 2002 letter from the office of the Commissioner of Agriculture we are presenting our final report that is required under the USDA Block Grant.

Objectives:

1. Improve variety, quantity and quality consistency of produce
2. Reduce wasted effort and drudgery
3. Increase coverage in local media
4. Increase immediate local market demand
5. Prepare for wholesale opportunities
6. Explore value-added processing opportunities
7. Improve profit margins with business planning
8. Start developing potential growers for the future

Activities Completed:

1. Hired project coordinator;
Project coordinator selected the seeds to plant for the season extension project at the Southeastern Purdue experimental farm. Planned field trips, selected the agriculture books at the library, made survey for growers and assisted growers with problems. Coordinator set up information for meats and vegetables to restaurants.
2. Surveyed growers and conducted producer training meetings;
The growers were surveyed and training was given on the new crops they wanted to grow. A training session at 4 different locations in 2 counties was given by a grower from lower Kentucky on his operation.
3. Established horticulture learning center at county library;
Over 100 new Agriculture books are at the library for information on growing and extending the growing season. Also many books for marketing ideas.

4. Established season-extension demonstration facilities;
2 greenhouses were set up at SEPAC and Vegetable greens were kept alive all winter with no heat. Recordings of ground and house temperatures were taken most days. A sweet bell pepper plot of 7 colors is growing on red, black, silver plastic and dirt at the facilities now. Warm weather garden plants were started in the houses on silver and black plastic with dirt plots before freezing temperatures were over and are doing fine. Houses are moved to the next site when outside temperatures are warm enough.
5. Ordered seed, planted and harvested cool season produce;
Over 20 types of seed was planted for the winter trials, with butter crunch Lettuce, red and green mixed leaf lettuce and Mizuna winning for the best growing and eating mix. Small Poc Choi leaves were mixed in also. Samples of seed were given to growers. Many new greens are being sold at the farmers market this spring.
6. Prepared grower training materials;
Extra information was made for each growers special needs of their crop and booklets were handed out on building season extension houses and row covers.
7. Attended annual growers meeting and Hort. Congress;
Growers attended the Hort. Congress and were also at the annual meeting to hear Joe Pearson speak.
8. Toured southern produce farms and markets;
Visited markets in Mississippi, South Carolina and Kentucky. Also toured produce farms in Jennings and Decatur county.
9. Visited Cumberland cooperative;
A trip was made to Cumberland cooperative.
10. Assisted with Ohio Valley Marketing Conference;
Ohio Valley Marketing Conference was started to get a Jennings Grower co-op director to shut his mouth one day at a SIRDOP meeting at Hoosier Energy bldg. A sub committee of Roy Ballard, Gary Conant and Bud was appointed and away we went. The original intent was to find markets for the small growers of Indiana. As other people got in on the event, it turned in to a multi-state conference. The co-op has decided the only way to develop markets on the local level is to create them ourselves.

11. Assisted WIC with education materials;

The following is a list of supplies used for demonstrations, at the farmers market, by WIC workers to show WIC mothers how to prepare food from the farmers market.

100 ft. extension cord	6 outlet power strip
20" x 48" multi use table	2 table cloths
Oven mitt	Utensil set
9" x 17" cutting board	3 Sterilite storage boxes
3 small bowls	2 Small plates
2 Saran disposable cutting sheets	Sunbeam toaster oven
12" West Bend electric skillet	Presto Kitchen Kettle

12. Had grower field day tours;

Several tours of SEPAC and local farms were taken. Also we went to a produce farm around Cave City KY. For training of growing greens and other vegetables in the off seasons.

13. Visited regional farmers markets;

After looking at the large markets we decided not to change our rules, because the big markets have people buying vegetables from growers and the grower still gets a small price for their crop.

14. Developed market contacts;

New Places and people are buying the growers crop. They are selling at the farm, local restaurants, produce stands and a restaurant chain.

15. Assisted in developing new farmers markets;

We have given several talks on starting farmers markets, and are still getting calls to help start markets. We assist any group free that calls. Some of the county's were Ripley, Jackson, Orange, Green, Jefferson and others. We now have calls from other states.

16. Developed supply network for restaurants and produce stands;

The Co-op has been setting up growers from Jennings, Decatur, Marion, Bartholomew, and Hamilton counties to sell at MCL and other places. The co-op has had meetings with the local school system to put local grown vegetables and meats in the school during the 2003-2004 year. If this venture is successful, each county can feed its own school systems, jails, health care operations and other organizations.